

South Camden Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100051
Local Authority	Camden
Inspection number	285712
Inspection dates	10–11 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Christopher Russell HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1085
6th form	220
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Jill Hoffbrand
Headteacher	Ms Rosemary Leeke
Date of previous school inspection	17 September 2001
School address	Charrington Street London NW1 1RG
Telephone number	020 7387 0126
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Age group	11-19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

South Camden Community School is a slightly larger than average sized comprehensive school serving an inner city area. The school population is ethnically diverse: most students come from Black or other minority ethnic groups and almost half have Bangladeshi heritage. Most students have English as an additional language and around 60 are currently at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is almost double the national average. Levels of social and economic deprivation in the local area are high. The school is a specialist arts college.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

South Camden Community School is providing a satisfactory standard of education. Some aspects of the school's work are good.

Students' personal development and well-being have improved recently and are now good. There has been a considerable focus in recent years on improving behaviour. Strong systems have been introduced and applied consistently across the school. The vast majority of students now behave well in lessons. Despite the severe physical constraints of the school, students show consideration to each other and also behave well around the site. Students are positive, feel safe in school and enjoy learning. Attendance, which was a key issue at the last inspection, has improved significantly and is now satisfactory. The school supports students very well. Staff work hard to successfully meet the sometimes complex and challenging needs of students. The way in which the school sets targets for students and monitors their progress has been a focus for the school over the past eighteen months and has improved quickly.

As behaviour has improved, teachers and leaders have felt more able to concentrate on teaching and learning. There has been a considerable focus over the past year on improving and developing the quality of lessons. This is leading to a demonstrable improvement: teaching and learning are now satisfactory and improving. Lessons have many positive features, but also some weaknesses. In many lessons, work is not matched closely to the specific needs and starting points of individual students. Opportunities for students to learn independently and to take greater responsibility for their learning are also rather limited. As a result, students make satisfactory rather than good progress, attaining slightly below average standards at the end of Year 11. Students make greater progress during Key Stage 4 than during Key Stage 3.

The curriculum is satisfactory. The range of courses available to Key Stage 4 students is gradually increasing. The school is also beginning to look at ways in which it can develop the curriculum at Key Stage 3 to help raise standards further.

The headteacher and other senior staff provide clear and effective leadership and direction for the school. The senior leadership team has recently been restructured and roles revised. Senior leaders have a realistic picture of the school's strengths and areas for development, and the rigour of evaluation across the school is increasing. Clearer and more consistent expectations of middle leaders are now in place. They are also receiving greater support and guidance from senior leaders. As a result, they are increasingly able to monitor and improve the quality of work in their areas. However, developments are still at an early stage and this sharper practice is not yet consistent across the school.

There has been a strong trajectory of recent improvement and the school is now well placed to continue to improve. Effective systems for communication and consultation mean that staff at all levels feel involved in the school's improvement and development. Specialist status as an arts college is playing a central role in this improvement and is a strength of the school's work.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The sixth form is popular with students and the staying on rate from Year 11 is high. The curriculum meets the diverse needs of students well. The school has good links with other schools to broaden the range of courses available and students are able to select from a good range of academic and vocational courses. A particular strength of the curriculum is the entry

course for students at an early stage of learning English. In many cases, students successfully spend three years in the sixth form, progressing through foundation, intermediate and advanced level courses. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and, as a result, students make satisfactory progress in their learning. There is a good balance between challenge and support. However, in some lessons there are limited opportunities for students to be more actively involved in their own learning.

Students' personal development and well-being are good. Students appreciate the opportunities to take on greater responsibility, for example by mentoring younger students. Students are very positive about the care, guidance and support that they receive. One said, 'what drew me in was the level of support I knew I'd get'. The progress of students is monitored well, although at times the process lacks sufficient rigour. The school develops appropriate strategies to help students who are underachieving. For example, students from University College London provide very good academic mentoring for some sixth formers. The percentage of students continuing to higher education has increased in recent years.

The leadership of the sixth form is satisfactory with some good features. The head of sixth form has a clear understanding of strengths and weaknesses. This and the positive impact of some current initiatives demonstrate a strong capacity for further improvement. As one student put it, 'the sixth form has the potential to be really good'.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise students' achievement at Key Stage 3.
- Develop teachers' practice across the school so that a greater proportion of teaching is good and meets the individual needs of students more closely.
- Develop the work of middle leaders so that their practice is sharper and more consistently effective across the school.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

While there is considerable fluctuation between years groups, students generally enter the school with standards that are somewhat below the national average.

Key Stage 3 test results have risen since the last inspection, although they are still very low. In 2006 results dipped slightly and these students made inadequate progress. Analysis of the unvalidated test results indicates that students made greater progress in 2007. This and the observation of progress in lessons demonstrate that students make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 3, attaining below average standards. However, many students could achieve more.

Students make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 4, attaining standards that are slightly below the national average. GCSE results increased in 2006. Unvalidated results for 2007 indicate that these improvements were maintained last year. These students had slightly lower attainment when they entered the school, indicating that they made greater progress than students taking GCSEs in the previous year.

The sixth form has a broad entry policy and students enter the sixth form with below average starting points. Students' standards when they leave the sixth form are below the national average. Given their starting points and capabilities, sixth form students studying on the wide range of courses offered by the school make satisfactory progress.

The achievement of different groups of students is closely monitored and appropriate action taken where necessary. There are no significant differences between the progress made by different groups of learners, including the various ethnic groups that make up the school population.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students are confident, enjoy school and have good attitudes to learning. Their spiritual, moral, cultural and social development is good. Relationships are good and students from different cultures work well together. Students feel safe in school and say that bullying is dealt with quickly and effectively. Attendance and behaviour have improved significantly because of the robust procedures that the school has put in place.

Students' awareness of health and safety is good and they work safely in practical lessons. Students also have a good understanding of what it means to live a healthy lifestyle and they participate enthusiastically in sport and physical activity. The school works in close and effective partnership with a wide range of organisations in the local community, many linked to its specialist status. This partnership helps students to make a positive contribution to the school and local community. Students are able to take on a range of responsibilities. The school council is strong and students feel that the school listens to them and takes their views seriously. Students develop a satisfactory range of skills for employment and future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The school has a thorough system for monitoring the quality of lessons. The assessments made by senior staff matched the findings of the inspection team closely. A number of strategies are being used to support the development of teaching. Advanced skills teachers and strong practitioners in the arts are being used to model good practice. The school is also working closely with students to ensure that teaching reflects the way in which they learn best. As a result, teaching and learning are now satisfactory. No inadequate lessons were observed during the inspection. A significant and increasing number of lessons are good or better. Teachers have good relationships with students, who have positive attitudes to learning and respond well to effective teaching. However, the school's improvement work is still at an early stage and the quality of teaching is inconsistent across the school. In particular, work in lessons is often not closely matched to the learning needs of all students. As a result, students make satisfactory rather than good progress.

There is some good practice in assessment and marking. In art, students explained how 'the environment where our work is displayed and clear posters outline how to improve and makes

you want to do better yourself without being told'. However, teachers do not always use assessment fully to support better learning. Some marking provides helpful diagnostic comments, but sometimes lacks detail. Opportunities for students to assess their own and other students' work are also infrequent. As a result, students are not always able to identify how to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum is satisfactory and meets statutory requirements. Provision in the specialist subjects is strong. At Key Stage 4, students have access to a satisfactory range of options, with some opportunities to take more vocational or applied courses. However, these opportunities are currently rather limited. The school is starting to look at ways in which the curriculum can be developed to help students make greater progress at Key Stage 3. In the sixth form, the range of available courses meets the diverse and complex needs of students well. The school offers a wide range of activities at lunchtime and after school, with good opportunities for students to engage in sport and other physical activity. These opportunities are popular with students.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support is good and students feel well supported by the school. The needs of students with English as an additional language are met well. A pastoral review forum identifies students who require additional help and support to meet their needs. Well-developed systems and procedures are in place to improve attendance. Good patterns of attendance are encouraged and individual students are monitored closely where their levels of absence are a concern. As a result, attendance has improved significantly in recent years.

The way in which the school tracks students' behaviour has developed rapidly and is now good. This allows the school to provide targeted support for individual students to help them to develop good behaviour. Similarly, the system by which the school sets targets for students and monitors their academic progress has also improved significantly over the past year. There is now a coordinated and more rigorous approach to this work. However, senior leaders rightly realise that further work is needed to ensure that the new systems and processes are applied consistently across the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The headteacher and senior leaders have a clear focus on raising standards and promoting students' personal development. Staff at all levels increasingly share this sense of common purpose and direction. This has helped to bring about a number of recent improvements, for example in student behaviour and the quality of teaching.

A number of recent changes have been made to the organisation and work of senior and middle leaders. Systems and processes are now in place to involve them more fully in monitoring the

quality of provision in their areas and in planning for improvement. These changes are already helping middle leaders to make a greater contribution to the school's development. However, they are not yet sharp enough to fully support greater accountability and effectiveness. Governors are supportive and help to shape the school's direction. Specialist college work is imaginative and is making a strong contribution to the school's improvement.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2	2
The attendance of learners	3	3
The behaviour of learners	2	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

29 October 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of South Camden Community School, London, NW1 1RG

Thank you for your help and for taking the time to talk to us during the recent inspection. I am writing to you to tell you about our main findings. We judged the school to be satisfactory with some good features.

The way in which the school cares for you and helps you to develop as young people is good. The school has worked hard to ensure that everyone behaves well and that lessons are not disrupted. We found that this work had been very successful. The atmosphere around the school is good and we found students to be confident, sensible and well behaved. We were also pleased to see that attendance has improved.

As behaviour has improved, staff have been able to concentrate on making lessons as good as possible. We saw many good lessons. We could see that you respond positively to good teaching and enjoy learning. We did, however, find that lessons are not consistently good. We have asked the school to continue working on this area, so that more lessons are similar to the best. We think that this will help you to achieve even more, particularly at Key Stage 3.

There have been many changes to the school's leadership and management in the last year or two. These changes are clearly leading to much positive development and we have asked the school to continue with this work.

We felt that the school is well placed to continue improving over the coming years. The inspection team wish you well for the future.

Yours faithfully

Chris Russell

Her Majesty's Inspector